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ABSTRACT

Establishing statewide standards that define what a Minnesota public high school graduate should know and be able to do to function effectively as a purposeful thinker, effective communicator, self-directed learner, productive group participant, and responsible citizen, this legislation outlines the graduation standards in Written Composition that Minnesota public schools must require for a high school diploma for all students who enter ninth grade in 1997 or a subsequent year. Listing three definitions, it then presents statewide graduation standards for Written Composition. It gives general guidelines for score scale points and it gives statewide standards in basic requirements for testing. It discusses alternative tests for written composition, school district responsibilities, test of written composition for limited English proficient students, and passing scores for state tests of written composition. (SC)

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CHAPTER 3501
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND LEARNING GRADUATION STANDARDS

(3501.0200-3501.0290)

Written Composition

NOTE: In 1998, the Minnesota Legislature passed and Governor Arne H. Carlson signed legislation that affected the following rule. This legislation requires that after June 30, 1998, only the state-developed Basic Standards Tests may be used to meet Minnesota's public school graduation requirements. This legislation removed the options for using locally-developed or nationally-normed tests to meet these graduation requirements. A process to amend this rule is underway. Districts have been notified of the effect of the 1998 legislation on this rule.

- PURPOSE.
- SCOPE.
- DEFINITIONS.
- STATEWIDE GRADUATION STANDARD FOR WRITTEN COMPOSITION.
- TESTING FOR STATEWIDE STANDARDS.
- GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SCORE SCALE POINTS.
- ALTERNATIVE TESTS FOR WRITTEN COMPOSITION.
- SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES.
- TEST OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION; LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) STUDENTS.
- PASSING SCORE FOR STATE TESTS OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION.

3501.0200 PURPOSE.

The purpose of parts 3501.0200 to 3501.0290 is to establish a statewide standard that describes what a Minnesota public high school student must demonstrate in written composition to be eligible for a high school diploma.

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3501.0210 SCOPE.

CS 013 602

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Parts 3501.0200 to 3501.0290 govern the written composition standard for a high school diploma that Minnesota public schools must require of all students who enter ninth grade in 1997 or a subsequent year.

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3501.0220 DEFINITIONS.

Subpart 1. Scope. For the purposes of parts 3501.0200 to 3501.0290, the terms defined in part 3501.0030 have the same meaning unless otherwise clearly indicated.

Subp. 2. Definitions for basic requirement in written composition testing. For the purposes of parts 3501.0200 to 3501.0290, the following terms have the meanings given them.

A. "Prompt" means a statement of a writing task for which the student is to create a written composition for a specified adult reader.

B. "Scoring criteria" means the five writing characteristics in part 3501.0230, subpart 2, to be used by trained raters in determining to what degree a written response to a prompt does or does not meet the statewide standard for written composition.

C. "Written composition" or "composition" means the composite acts of formulating and preparing, in English, a clearly focused, organized, developed, coherent, and clearly expressed message to be communicated to an adult reader in a written format.

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3501.0230 STATEWIDE GRADUATION STANDARD FOR WRITTEN COMPOSITION.

Subpart 1. Basic requirements. The basic graduation requirement for written composition is established in parts 3501.0210 to 3501.0290. The statewide standard for written composition is specified in subpart 2.

Except for decisions consistent with parts 3501.0090 and 3501.0100, to qualify for a high school diploma, a student shall demonstrate competency in the statewide standard for written composition through one of the testing options in part 3501.0250, subpart 1. Districts may require higher standards, additional demonstrations, or both of competency in written composition beyond the statewide standards.

Subp. 2. Statewide standard in written composition. A student shall demonstrate the ability to create, in English, a written composition. An adequate written composition must show:

A. clarity of central ideas such that the composition responds directly and specifically to the task presented in the prompt;

B. coherent focus such that the supporting ideas expressed in the composition relate clearly to the central idea and that there is a clear connection among ideas. Coherent focus may be accomplished through transitions, parallel structure, or other unifying devices;

C. organization such that the ideas are expressed in an order which is logical and clear and the composition contains a beginning, middle, and end. The student may

choose one of a variety of organizational strategies such as cause/effect, problem/solution, chronological sequence, topical order, or spatial organization;

D. detailed support or elaboration of ideas. The composition must include any or all of the following: information; verbal illustrations; explanations; and examples, which sufficiently clarify and expand the student's central idea for the reader. These details must be logically connected to the central idea; and

E. language conventions such that the composition includes features of language that are acceptable in standard written discourse. Language conventions are important to ensure that the meaning of the written composition is not impaired. The writer shall apply rules of sentence formation, language choice and order, and language mechanics including punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, of standard written English.

Subp. 3. Scoring. When scoring written compositions, there shall be a no minimum length requirement. Ratings shall be based on the overall quality of the written response relative to the scoring criteria. The general guidelines for score scale points in part 3501.0240 shall be used to evaluate adequate demonstration of the characteristics in subpart 2.

Handwriting must be decipherable. While students should be encouraged to write as neatly as they can, there shall be no penalty for poor handwriting, except that only compositions that are legible shall be scored.

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3501.0240 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SCORE SCALE POINTS.

Subpart 1. Scoring criteria. Trained raters shall apply the scoring criteria under part 3501.0230, subpart 2, for the basic requirement in written composition to assign score scale points according to subparts 2 to 6.

Subp. 2. Four-point rating. A more than adequate student response in composition shall receive four points. A student response is more than adequate if the composition:

A. is related to the prompt;

B. has a central idea that is clearly expressed;

C. is well developed with supporting details;

D. has a beginning, middle, and end; and

E. demonstrates excellent control of the language that enhances the overall quality of the response.

Subp. 3. Three-point rating. An adequate student response in composition shall receive three points. A student response is adequate if the composition:

A. is related to the prompt;

B. has a central idea that is clearly expressed;

C. is developed with supporting details but may present minor obstacles to the reader in moving from one idea to another;

D. has a beginning, middle, and end; and

E. demonstrates adequate control of the language in that the composition may have minor errors in sentence formation, usage, or mechanics, but these do not substantially detract from the overall quality of the composition.

Subp. 4. Two-point rating. A less than adequate student response in composition shall receive two points. A student response is less than adequate if the composition:

A. is related to the prompt; but

B. is not well focused;

C. presents obstacles to the reader in moving from idea to idea;

D. lacks a beginning, middle, or end; or

E. contains errors in sentence formation, word usage, and mechanics that are frequent enough to detract from the overall quality of the composition.

Subp. 5. One-point rating. A very inadequate student response shall receive one point. A student response is very inadequate if the composition:

A. is related to the prompt; but

B. lacks a central idea or coherent focus;

C. is difficult to follow;

D. is not clearly organized; or

E. contains errors in sentence formation, word usage, and mechanics that are frequent enough to detract from the overall quality of the composition.

Subp. 6. Not scorable (N). A student response that cannot be evaluated shall receive an N. A student response shall be designated not scorable when a rater and the scoring leader agree that the composition:

A. is not related to the prompt;

B. is not readable because it is illegible or incoherent;

C. is written in a language other than English;

D. contains an insufficient amount of writing to evaluate; or

E. is blank in that no response is given.

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3501.0250 TESTING FOR STATEWIDE STANDARDS IN THE BASIC REQUIREMENT OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION.

Subpart 1. District testing options. A school district shall test for competency in the statewide standard in the basic requirement of written composition by using:

A. a state test; or

B. an alternative test approved by the state according to the criteria in part 3501.0260.

Subp. 2. Offering tests in basic requirements. A district shall first offer a test of the basic requirement in written composition to students in grade 10. Nonpassing students shall be given the opportunity to retake a test of the basic requirement in written composition at least annually.

Subp. 3. Additional testing opportunities. A district shall establish a process for additional testing of students who by April 1 of their anticipated graduation year have not passed a test in the basic requirement in written composition.

The process shall include:

A. how the parent, student, or both can request:

(1) an additional testing opportunity to take the basic requirement in written composition test; and

(2) testing accommodations;
B. the procedure that the district shall use to act on a request in item A; and
C. how a parent, student, or both can appeal the district's action under item B.
In addition to the regularly scheduled annual availability of a new form of the state test, an additional statewide administration of the state test shall be made available by the department for one additional retesting of seniors.
Subp. 4. Transfer students. A student transferring into a district shall not be required to take a test of the basic requirement for written composition if the student's record from the former school verifies that the student has already passed a test of that basic requirement consistent with this part. This subpart applies even if the student transfers into a district that has higher standards than the statewide standard for the basic requirement in written composition.
Subp. 5. Specifications for state test in written composition. The state test shall assess the statewide standard for the basic requirement in written composition. The state test shall be written, administered, and scored according to subparts 6 to 8.
Subp. 6. Test contents. The state test shall require a student to compose a single composition in response to one prompt. The prompt shall:
A. require no prior preparation for response;
B. indicate that the response should be written for a specific adult reader;
C. accommodate a variety of writing strategies and instruction;
D. contain a topic that is unknown to students, their parents, teachers, or test proctors before the actual testing session; and
E. elicit demonstration of the general scoring criteria of the statewide standard for the basic requirement in written composition.
Subp. 7. Test administration. The state test shall be administered according to standard conditions for administration that shall be provided to the district with the test.
A. The state test shall be untimed but must be completed in an unbroken block of time. Once the student is excused for lunch, another class, activity, or to go home, the testing session has been concluded.
B. The state test shall require that the student's response be written directly in the test booklets without the use of word processors or writing tools other than pencils and pens, except when the district determines that a student has a physical condition that prevents the student writing by hand or as provided for under part 3501.0090.
C. A student shall not use a dictionary, thesaurus, or other published or prepared reference or preparation material of any type during testing.
Subp. 8. Test scoring. Tests shall be scored independently by members of a state-approved, trained scoring panel using the scoring criteria and the scoring process specified by the state. The state scoring process for the test of the basic requirement in written composition shall be according to items A to E.
A. The state shall contract with an independent vendor chosen for its experience and reliability in training and conducting the scoring of tests of written composition.
B. The contracted vendor shall train each rater on the prompt to be scored and each rater shall satisfactorily complete a qualifying assessment prior to scoring actual student responses. The contractor shall provide periodic reports of interrater

agreement as scoring progresses and summary data on interrater agreement when scoring has been completed. The contractor shall also periodically recheck the accuracy of each rater. To qualify for scoring student responses, an individual rater shall demonstrate at least a 90 percent rate of agreement with scores assigned by scoring leaders.

C. A rubric, which is the scoring criteria applied to example compositions unique to a specific prompt, shall be developed as part of the rater training process for rating a specific prompt.

D. Each composition shall be rated independently by two raters. Raters shall assign ratings on a scale of one to four (1-4) or assign a designation of not scorable according to the general scoring criteria in part 3501.0240 and the rubric developed for the specific prompt being scored. When a rater assigns N, the scoring leader shall either determine that the final score is N or declare the test scorable. A test, declared scorable through this procedure, shall be returned to begin the rating process again. Raters may assign only whole number ratings. Except as provided in item E, the written composition score for each student shall be the average of the two assigned ratings. An average score of at least 3.0 shall be required to pass the written composition test.

E. A student composition shall be evaluated by a third rater who is a scoring leader when the composition receives two ratings that:

(1) differ by more than one point; or

(2) consist of one 2 and one 3 rating. The scoring leader shall independently assign a third rating to the composition. The final score shall be calculated by averaging the two ratings that are on the same side of the pass/not pass line. Final scores that are possible under this item are: 1, 1.5, 2, 3, 3.5, and 4. An assigned score of at least 3.0 shall be required to pass the written composition test.

Subp. 9. Test review. All written compositions shall be returned to districts after scoring is completed so that schools, teachers, and students have the opportunity to review them for diagnosis of student writing proficiency and identification of needs for further instruction. Districts may request, in advance of scoring, that compositions with failing scores be returned with analytic scoring to provide additional assistance in preparing the student for retesting.

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3501.0260 ALTERNATIVE TESTS FOR WRITTEN COMPOSITION.

Subpart 1. Choice of test. A district may choose a test for written composition from the list of tests that have been submitted, reviewed, and approved by the department according to the criteria in subpart 2. Alternative tests may be national, regional, statewide, or local instruments which assess skills in written composition in English. Requests for review of alternative tests must be submitted to the department by February 1 of the school year preceding the year of intended test administration. The department shall publish the list of all approved tests annually by August 1.

Subp. 2. Criteria for alternative tests. The following criteria shall be used by the state to review and approve alternative tests for written composition:

A. the test is designed specifically to assess written composition skills including at

least those specified in part 3501.0230, subpart 2;

B. the test requires at least one written composition and the written composition portion of the test accounts for at least 50 percent of the total test score;

C. evidence is provided to demonstrate that:

(1) the test is scored by multiple raters who are independent of the testing district and whose pass/fail interrater reliability is at least 90 percent; and

(2) the scoring criteria and scoring process used for the test meet or exceed parts 3501.0240 and 3501.0250, subpart 8; or

(3) the district contracts with the state's vendor to score the test according to the state scoring process;

D. students are not permitted to use a dictionary, thesaurus, or other published or prepared reference or preparation material of any type during the testing session;

E. the test is administered under conditions which ensure that the responses are the original work of the student; and

F. there is a current manual which describes the development of the test instrument, recommended uses of the instrument, and technical data including reliability and validity.

Subp. 3. Test security and recordkeeping. A district which chooses an alternative test shall be responsible for test security, recordkeeping, and reporting as if the district had chosen the state test option. A different prompt for the written composition portion or portions of the alternative test must be used each time the alternative test is administered.

Subp. 4. Continuation of approval. Once a test has been approved, it may continue to be used by districts unless the annual August 1 listing specifically terminates the approval.

Subp. 5. Revised test specifications. Future changes in rule or law of the state test specifications for written compositions shall terminate state approval of alternative tests and require that the alternative tests be resubmitted for review under the revised state test specifications.

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3501.0270 SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES.

For the purposes of parts 3501.0200 to 3501.0290, parts 3501.0090 to 3501.0170 apply.

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3501.0280 TEST OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION; LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) STUDENTS.

Subpart 1. Testing considerations. For the purposes of parts 3501.0200 to 3501.0290, part 3501.0100 applies when testing Limited English Proficient (LEP) students.

Subp. 2. Test prompts. A district may translate into another language test prompts for tests of written composition.

Subp. 3. Individual student progress. In addition to the requirements in subparts 1 and 2 and part 3501.0130, individual student progress shall be reported on a student

record as described in items A and B.

A. "Pass-translation" shall be the designation for reporting individual student passing scores in tests of written composition when test prompts are translated into a language other than English for the student. However, the student's response must be written in English without the use of any of the materials prohibited in part 3501.0250, subpart 7, item C.

B. "Pass-limited English proficiency" shall be recorded on the student record for written composition, at the request of the student or parent, when an analytic review, conducted by the state contracted vendor, of a twelfth grade LEP student's test concludes that the failing score has resulted solely from inadequate demonstration of language conventions described in part 3501.0230, subpart 2, item E. In no case, however, shall the "pass-limited English proficiency" designation be assigned to a composition completed primarily in a language other than English. No Limited English Proficient (LEP) student or parent shall be required to accept this designation to replace further instruction and further opportunities to achieve a "pass-state level" designation as defined in part 3501.0130, subpart 2, item A.

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3501.0290 PASSING SCORE FOR STATE TESTS OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION.

The passing score for the state test of written composition is a rating of 3, consistent with part 3501.0250, subpart 8, items D and E.

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